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Armenian Demonology: A Critical Overview*

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Abstract

The paper is a critical study of the Armenian demonic nomenclature of the ancient and later periods, covering the Classical and Middle Armenian texts and modern dialects, including Western Armenian traditions, which were alive until the first decades of the 20th century among the population of the Armenian provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

The author presents a full list of the Armenian demons of different periods, critically revising the origin of their names and functions on a comparative background.

Keywords

Armenian Demons, Iranian Demons, Armenian Folk-Beliefs, Armenian Mythology, Iranian Folk-Beliefs

Armenian Demons of the Classical Period

The Classical Armenian demons are generally well-known and have been examined many times in the relevant literature in relation to the Iranian material or separately (see, e. g., Štakel'berg 1900: 18 ff.; Ališan 1910; Šahaziz 1902: 45-57; Xostikean 1917; Tēr-Połosean 1929; Garamanlean 1931; Ishkol-Kerovpian 1986; Russell 1987; Asatrian 1995; etc.) There are 21 names attested in Classical literature, denoting various kinds of maleficent beings: *devk'*, *k'aǰk'*, *čark'*, *hrēš*, *satana*, *Azazel*, *Bēełzebuł* (in modern dialects *Vełzevuł*, *Bełzebułz*, *Pełceon*), *višap*, *druž*, *aysk'*, *payk'*, *šidark'*, *čiwałk'*, *šahapetk'*, *Sadayel*, *Belial/r*, *hambaru*, *parik*, *yuškaparik*, *nhang*, and *hešmak* (in the compound *hešmakapaštk'* "worshippers of *hešmak*" in Ez-

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nik, as a synonym of *satana*). Most of those terms are transparent, being either of Iranian or Semitic origin. There are only a few genuine Armenian forms. The Semitic names are the so-called learned or literary words coming mainly from the Bible: *satana, Azazel, Bēełzebuł*, and *Belial*; *šidar(k')* is probably from Syriac *šəṭar* "crazy, stupid" (as suggested by Ačaṙyan 1977: 615-616; otherwise, see Russell 1987: 411), and *Sadayel*, a later form meaning "Satan", but without a convincing interpretation.[1]

The names of Iranian origin prevail by number and belong probably to the spoken language. Some of them can be easily identified with their Iranian parallels: *dev(k')*—with *dēv*; *hešmak* (Georg. *hešmaḳi*)—from an unattested MPers. **hēšmak*, Pahlavi *xēšm*, Parthian *išmag* (cf. also Av. *aēšma-* "wrath", also "demon of wrath"); *parik*—from MPers. *parīk* (Av. *pairikā-*, lengthily discussed by Bivar 1985; see, however, a more substantiated view in Schwartz 2008); and *nhang* "an aquatic monster"—from a MPers. **nihang* (NPers. *nahang* "crocodile".[2] For *višap* "dragon" compare Av. *Aži Višāpa*; *hrēš* "monster"—from Iran. **fraš-* (the *-ē-* is due to a secondary reference to *hrēštak*); and *druž* "a harmful *dev*"—from Parth. *druž* "demon" (Av. *druǰ-*, MPers. *druz*). However, the rest of the ostensibly Iranian forms require additional comments.

Arm. *šahapet* (attested in Agathangelos and Eznik) denoted a class of supernatural beings, probably spirits of cultivated lands (*šahapet vayrac'*), vineyards or even guardians of tombs; they are associated with aquatic and terrestrial reptiles, particularly with serpents, and appear mostly in the shape of snakes. Hübschmann (1897: 208-209), pointing to Av. *šōiθra-* "homestead", *šōiθrō-pāna-* and Vedic *kṣétra-* "living place" (*kṣétrapati-* "guardian spirit of households"), reconstructed for *šahapet* a hypothetic Avestan form, **šōiθra-paiti-*, meaning "ruler of a homestead" (see also Ishkol-Kerovpian 1986: 136; Schmitt 1976: 383-84; Russell 1987: 329 ff.). However, as convincingly shown recently by M. Schwartz (2009), Arm. *šahapet*, as a chtonic figure, can only be derived from OIran. **xšaθrapati-* "Lord of the (underworld) City/Realm" modelled (calqued) after Nergal,

[1] The Armenian Dictionary of Venice (*Nor baṙgirk' haykazean lezui*) explains it from *satan* + *-el* by analogy with other angelic names ending with this element (apud Ačaṙyan, ibid.: 153).

[2] In New Iranian, to my knowledge, this word as a term for "demon, monster" or *yūl* is preserved only in the dialects of the Kashan area (see Asatrian 2011: s.v.).

the Mesopotamian netherworld god, whose name goes back to a Sumerian phrase "Lord of the Great City". It refers to a durable Mesopotamian conception of the realm of the dead as a large urban settlement. This god, Schwartz (ibid.: 149) says, "Patently non-Zoroastrian, would have been brought to Persia by the Magians as part of their old religion. Thus, Khshathrapati would have come to Persia from the Magian homeland, Media, and specifically Media Atropatene. This provenience would suit the northern Mesopotamian history of the Nergal cult, and the origin of the Armenian *šahapet*". It seems, the former theory of Bivar (1999: 16ff.) regarding Mithra as **xšaϑrapati-* "lord of the kingdom", should be abandoned now. Linguistically, too, Arm. *šahapet* can be fairly traced back to OIran. **xšaϑra-pati-*. It is supported also by the New Iranian data. Among the Gurans, Lurs, and Laks, there is a demon, sort of a succubus, which is called respectively *šüē*, *šöy*, and *šūvī*/*šawa*. It appears at night, usually to sleeping young men, in the appearance of a beautiful woman and causes pollution or, sometimes, suffocation (Asatrian, apud Yusefvand 2008: 279). Phonetically all these names can also be derived from the same OIran. etymon, **xšaϑrapati-*. However, the semantic side seems to be deficient, although it must be the result of a secondary reference to "night", as the OIran. **xšapa-* in these dialects has similar phonetic outcomes. Nonetheless, we now have a more genuine form, *šē/avē* (*mērē šē/avē*) in Kurmanji Kurdish, which I recorded some years ago from an old man in Diarbekir (Turkey). It denotes a tall human-like being, covered by thick hair and totally black, which betrays its chthonic nature. This demon lives in the fields and appears to people during cattle-plague and pestilence, or, rather, its very emergence causes these disasters.[3] I have never met this name in any Kurmanji vocabulary or text published since M. Garzoni's *Grammatica e vocabolario della lingua kurda* in 1787. Only in the ethnographical description of the Armenians of the Van Lake basin by a native pundit (Movsisyan 1972: 61), there is a short *inter alia* note on this imaginary being. The author says that it was the Kurdish name of "a very tall demon or spectre who frightened people"; nothing else.

In any case, it is beyond doubt that these New Iranian demonic names must be genuine forms, having common origin with Arm. *šahapet*. How-

[3] Folk-etymologically, it is understood in Kurdish as *mērē šavē* "night-man".

ever, I should anticipate the examination of a later Arm. demon with regard to its alleged relation to *šahapet*. Some authors (see, e.g., Russell 1987: 329 ff.) describe them even together. I mean *šəvod* (or *šəvot*), the name of a class of evil beings persisted mainly among the Western Armenians, who believed they were invisible creatures living in houses, haylofts, and cattle-sheds during the winter. On the last day of February, the Armenians struck the walls or columns of the house and shouted: *šəvod i durs, martn i ners*, i.e. "Out with the *šəvod* and in with March", or "*Šəvod* go out, March come in". There was a belief that *šəvods* often chose cats, especially the black ones as their mediums. The *šəvods* seem to have been the personifications of house spirits with dual nature—noxious and benign: at least nothing is reported about their harmful functions, although the Armenian folk beliefs categorise them as demons *par excellence*. Usually, house spirits are personified by snakes, called sometimes *dovlat'*, or *barak'at'* "wealth, welfare", or *tnapan* "protector of the house". Such a demon—with almost the same characteristics—called *sifōt* (*sifōtēs*) is recorded also among the Cappadocian Greeks,[4] taken probably from Armenian. Incidentally, in the beliefs of the Armenians of New Nakhijevan (Rostov on Don), *šəvods* (figuring there as *živots*) have a quite different function: they are evil beings who become wheels, chase people and torture them (Šahaziz 1902: 53).

Anyway, the view that *šəvod* is a shortened form of *šahapet*, proposed by Russel, for instance (see ibid.: 333), leaving aside the semantic aspect of such identification, is also unacceptable by reasons of the inner-Armenian phonetic developments: Classical Arm. *šahapet*, had it been preserved, would sound in modern dialects something like **šəpet* (or **šəbed*), not *šəvod/t*. Therefore, *šovod* must be, indeed, as rightly suggested by Ačaŕyan (1977: 537), a loan-word from NPers. *šubāt/ṭ* "February", itself a borrowing from Syriac *šəbāt*. A dialectal variant of the same lexeme, *šifūt*, is preserved in Classical Persian in the meanings of "a human-like demon" and "a maniac"; possibly this form may be the ultimate source of the Arm.

[4] Cf. 'Δαίμων κρυπτόμενος εἰς τὰς διαφόρους γωνίας καὶ τὰ ἄδυτα τῆς οἰκίας καὶ βλάπτων πολυειδῶς τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ, εἴτε διὰ τυφλώσεως ἢ χωλώσεως, εἴτε δὶ ἀπαγωγῆς ἢ ἀλλαγῆς παίδων, εἴτε δὶ ἀσθενείας ἢ καὶ πλοπῆς' (Karolides 1885: 212).

šəvod.[5] In Armenian superstitions February is the month of evil beings when they gain freedom of action. Vardan Vardapet in his *Patmutiwn* ("History") says: *Bayc' z-šwot amisn anhnazandeal* [*devk'n*] *gorcen zkams iwreanc' tanelov zomans i mardkanē*, i.e. "But in the month of *šwot* (February) the rebellious demons (*devk'*) act at their own will, taking some of the people" (apud Ačaṙyan, ibid.: 538). The Armenians of Vaspurakan called this demon also *p'uṙdik*, which literally means "a spherical object made of wool".

From the Armenian demons of possibly Iranian origin, *hambaru* (or *hambari*) is mentioned in Eznik and in the Bible. Upon first sight, due to its external form, it can be simply related to Class. Arm. *hambar-* (Pers. *anbār*) "cellar, basement of the house" and explained as "cellar spirit", sort of a Russian *anbárnik*, which is an evil spirit living in store-houses (cellars). However, *hambaru*'s functional sphere is different. In the translation of the Bible it corresponds to the Greek σειρήνες, sirens. Eznik qualifies *hambarus* as a kind of mortal *devs* dwelling in ruins. Probably, they were perceived, rather, as a kind of demons having female erotic implications, perhaps a type of succubi.

Arm. *k'aǰ* in Classical Armenian is used only in the sense of "brave". The *k'aǰk'* (in pl.) in the ancient epic were a class of supernatural beings dwelling in Mount Ararat, who captured and imprisoned the Artaxiad king Artawazd. In modern Armenian, as well as in dialects, *k'aǰk'er* or *k'ašk'er* (with Class. Arm. pl. *-k'* + Mod. Arm. pl. formant *-er*) is a generic name for diabolic creatures, a synonym of *devk'* (or *dever*), like *ajinna* in Arabic or Persian.

The Iranian equivalent of Arm. *k'aǰ*, the Sogd. *kaǰ*, *kaž*, was first shown by Szemerényi (1970: 424-425). Arm. *k'aǰ* is borrowed in Georgian as *kaǯi*

[5] Although traditionally the Jewish peddlers and street-traders were considered to be of having infernal nature in Iran, *šifūt* could not be a regular term for the Jews in Persian; moreover, it could not feature by no means as a demonic name. The Jews have always been known in Iran as *yahūd* (Pahl. *yi/ahūd*) or *ǰu/ohūd*. The terms *čufut, šifut,* or *šufut*, denoting Jews in some Turkic dialects, particularly in Tatar, must likely be an adaptation of Sogd. *cxwd/δ /čaxūδ/*. Arm. *hreay* is probably from Parth. **(yi)hūδ(ya)*. M. Schwartz commented on this point: "I would see for "Jew" in Turkish a sound-symbolism of pejoration. The pejorative word spread throughout the Balkans from Ottoman Turkish (e.g. Greek *tsifútis*)".

"devil, Satan", in Cappadocian Greek as *katsóra* "nightmare, evil being" (Karolides 1885: 88). The same origin can be applied also probably to Avar *kaž* "house spirit".

One of the most interesting personages in Armenian demonology of the Classical period, often referred to in the scholarly literature, is *yuška-parik*, a mythical beast rendering Greek ὀνοκένταυρος of the Bible, and translated by Eznik as *išac'ul* "ass-bull". *Yuškpariks* also lived in ruins, as Eznik says: *yuškaparkac' asen bnakel yaweraksn*.

The textual indications and the etymology of the name unambiguously point to *yuškapariks* being donkey-like creatures, or "ass-centaurs" as the Georgian translation offers—*vir-k'ent'auros*. The word presents a compound, the second part of which is *parik* (MPers. *parīk*) mentioned above, here, likely, denoting an evil being as a generic characteristic. The first component, *yušk-*, as indicated by Bailey (1968: 158), means "ass, donkey" along with NPers. *vušk* "id.", and Khotan Saka *jūṣda-*, Wakhi *yukš* "wild goat, ibex".

Yuškaparik may be really a Parthian compound in Armenian; as for the concept itself, i.e. the idea of a donkey-demon, it seems to be an Iranian element as well. For, as far as I know, there is no any cultic figure—be it a demon, deity, or just a mythological personage—in the Armenian tradition having onophoric characteristics. The donkey was always considered by the Armenians as a symbol of stupidity, as in many Near Eastern traditions.

The ominous satanic side of the donkey's nature is represented in the Iranian folk beliefs in a demonic character, which must be a remote reflection of Arm. *yuškaperik*, its so-called modern manifestation.[6]

The population of the central and south-western provinces of Iran—Fars, Isfahan, Hamadan, etc.—believes in a demon called *mardezomā, ǰowānazmā*, or *māderezmā*. The name is translated by the locals as *mard-āzmā* "man tester". It lives in the deserts and appears to humans in the shape of a wellfed donkey. When people, deceived by finding a useful animal in a far-away place, ride it, M. takes them on its back to a precipice and throws them off. In the meantime, it usually turns round to reveal its

[6] This satanic side, as commented by M. Schwartz, may be based on the donkey's sexuality (cf. Sogd. *xarāw(a)n* "lust; adultery", *xarīčik/xarič(a)k* "whore; whorish").

glittering iron teeth and asks: "Have you ever seen donkey's teeth such as these?". In his turn, the rider, in order to get rid of the beast, must take his pickax, dagger or any iron object and frighten it by relaying: "And have you seen this kind of donkey-whip?".[7] Then M. suddenly disappears. Such a story about a saint riding a donkey-demon is related in a late Armenian text, in the Step'anos Orbelean's *History of Siwnik'* (Abrahamyan 1986: 92), which is an obvious echo of this Iranian belief.

Probably this is a unique case of demonising the donkey in the New Iranian continuum, although the cult of this animal, its veneration or demonisation could have existed in Ancient Iran. Arm. *yuškaparik* may be considered an element of such a cultic approach to the donkey.

There is a curious story about the traces of donkey-worship amongst the Kurds. The authors of this theory were Przyluski and Nikitine. The whole idea is formulated by the latter in his book on the Kurds (Nikitine 1956: 252-54).

Once Przyluski, Nikitine says, visited a Yezidi sanctuary in a village near Malatia,[8] where on the walls of the house he saw depictions of a hippocephalic creature and a bird, which was identified later by Nikitine as Malak Taus, the supreme deity of the Yezidis. Later on Przyluski found in Jaba/Justi's Vocabulary (1879: 330) a word-entry, *karnāmūt*, explained as "nom de la fête du 20^{me} Mars (i.e. *Naurūz*), le jour où les Kurdes vont habiter sous les tentes et où ils mènent leurs bestiaux au pâturage", and commented as *kar-nā-mūt* "l'âne ne meurt pas... de *kar* 'âne' et de l'arabe *maut*". These became the main indications to a supposed donkey-worship once practiced by the Kurds. Moreover, Przyluski tried to substantiate his theory by tracing etymological parallels between the tribal name *Kurd* and the Skr. and Dravidian terms denoting "ass, donkey", *garda(bha)*, *gadaboī*, *karuda*, *kadi*, etc. Nikitine, in his turn, adds the name of a Kurdish mosque near Ushnu in Iran, *K'arxorān*, as if meaning "donkey-eaters".

This theory later became a basic argument in favour of the higher antiquity of Kurdish culture and history, appearing from time to time in various publications of the Kurdish pundits.

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[7] In Hamadan, I heard a different version of the dialogue between the "man-tester" and the victim: *Nīš-e xar četoure?* ("How is the sting of the donkey?")/ *Tīše-ye najjār četaure?* ("How is the pickax of the carpenter?").

[8] As far as I am aware, no Yezidi ever lived in Malatia.

As a matter of fact, however, the donkey has always been a despised animal among the Kurds, a *terminus comparationis* for illogical behaviour and feeble-mindedness. Actually, this whole set of facts is a mere fantasy and misunderstanding: there is no Yezidi sanctuary outside Lalesh; depiction of Malak-Taus and even its name are strictly tabooed; *karnāmūt* is an Armenian borrowing in Kurdish, from Arm. dial. *k'arnamut* (literary *garnanamut*) "the advent of Spring"; *K'ar-xōrān* is a derogatory label given not to the mosque, but to the inhabitants of the village itself ("(the village of the) donkey-eaters"), etc.

The genuine vocabulary of demonic denominations in Classical Armenian includes only four items: *č'ark'* (which is a generic name for evil beings—in Modern Arm. with double pl. *č'ark'er*, from the adj. *č'ar* "evil"), *pay* "a mythical creature" (without a convincing etymology; maybe from MPers., compare MPers. *pāy* "protector"), *čiwał* "monster, demon" (also unexplainable; probably a Caucasian word),[9] and *ays*. The latter deserves to be discussed in more detail.

I will mention only the main points, as *aysk'* were thoroughly described by Russell (1987: 450 ff.). In Classical Armenian, *aysk'* are evil wind-demons. Eznik qualifies *ays* as "wind" (*hołm*) or "spirit" (*ogi*). In the Armenian translation of the Bible, it renders Greek *πνεῦμα*. As can be implied from the Eznik's respective passage, *ays* was used in the southern areas of Armenia, being a synonym of the northern *siwk'*. In the later tradition, however, *aysk'* degraded to ordinary *devk'*, who are believed to exist of either sex, and often marry each other; they also can become beasts to frighten sleeping people, etc.

The adjective *aysahar* "stricken by *ays*", which occurs already in Eznik and in the Bible, still is a living form and is widely used in Armenian dialects and urban vernaculars, mostly identifying madness or those with abnormal or exalted behaviour. In various contexts it appears to be a synonym of *k'ami-mtac* "(the one) possessed by a wind".

There is no shortage of attempts to explain this word—from Pers. *sāya* "shadow" to tracing it to Skt. *asu-*, etc.

The present corpus of the available texts in relevant languages gives currently no ground to assume either an Iranian, Semitic, or Hurro-

[9] Dowsett 1990: 353 suggests an Indo-European etymology for the Arm. *čiwał*

Urartian origin for the form under discussion. Any IE etymology also, due to the word's monosyllabic character, would be of obvious speculative character.

I have always wondered why one of the important Iranian deities, *Vay* (Av. *Vayu-*), has not been preserved in Armenian mythology. Probably, he was tabooed because of the explicit associations with death and the underworld his name invoked. I dare suggest Arm. *ays* to be just the demonstrative pronoun *ays* "this" used to avoid mentioning the name of this sinister deity (or, maybe, of another similar figure from the genuine Armenian pantheon).

If *Vay* were perpetuated in Armenian, it would have sounded exactly as **Vay*, as a homonym of *vay* (also in Phl. and NPers. *vāy*) "woe"! Maybe the reason the name of this deity has been lost in Armenian, was also its homonymy with this exclamation. The homophony caused the elimination of **Vay*. In the Arm. folklore (especially in lullabies), in curses and in various communicative contexts of dialectal speech, *vay* is implied as an acting subject, not exclamation. For instance, *Vayə k'ez tani* "Let *vay* take you away", *Vayə k'ez kuti* "*Vay* will eat you" (a formula for frightening small children), or *Vayə ekel mez tarel a* "*Vay* came and took us away" (a complaining formula for describing a disastrous situation), etc. However, it is possible that we are just dealing here with the personification of the exclamation, expressing misfortune and disaster.

Later Armenian Demons

As I said, the main generic terms for evil beings in the New Armenian traditions are *dever*, sometimes *č'ark'er* and *satananer*, also, in a more limited form, *kaǰk'er* (or *k'ašk'er*); *šaiṭān* (or *šayāṭīn*) is never mentioned in any Armenian context, although *ǰin* occurs in fairy tales.

The Armenians do not believe in gnomes or dwarfs—*ačuč-mačuč*, *aǰoǰ-maǰoǰ*, or *agog-magog* (from Arab. *yaʾǰūǰ wa maʾǰūǰ*, Hebr. *gōg wə magōg*) are, rather, a mythical tribe of microscopic people mentioned in folk eschatological stories. They bear no evil attributes.

Also, unlike Ancient Iranian views, the *p'eris* "fairies" are positive beautiful female beings—just like the situation we are faced with regard to *parīs* in Modern Iranian beliefs.

Werewolves are also vaguely attested in Armenia. The common term, *mardagayl* (lit. "wolf-man"), seems to be a later invention. People, usually refer to these creatures with alien, mainly Turkic terms—*gyoṙnap'əštik*, *goṙnadab*, or *xort'lax*. Werewolves are believed to be infidels who rise from their graves at night and commit evil acts. Among the main candidates to become a werewolf are first and foremost those Armenians who converted to Islam. Usually, people avoid Muslim graveyards as a potential threatening source for werewolves; at the same time the burial grounds of Muslims often used to be the places of various magical manipulations.

The 19th century famous Armenian writer Raffi, who was a great connoisseur of the Armenian folk-beliefs and folklore, distinguishes two kinds of *devs* and suggests even two forms of writing, although in Classical Armenian we have a single form—*dew(k')*. He believes, *devs* are ordinary supernatural beings, like *aǰinna*, but *dēvs* (with Arm. *-ē-*) are cannibal giants with enormous stature, horns and tusks and hairy appearance (like *'ifrīts*, Pers. *dīvs*, or Indian *rakṣásas*), who dwell in forests and mountains, etc. and are usually mentioned in fairy tales. He categorises these two groups of evil beings as respectively *satana-devar* ("satanic devs") and *hek'iat'ayin dever* ("fabulous, fantastic *devs*"). The "fabulous" *devs* (also *hskay* "giant",[10] *mardaker* "cannibal", *višap/ušap/vušap* "dragon", *t'ap'agyoz* "Cyclopes", etc.) in the Armenian folk-beliefs possess almost the same characteristics as *dīvs* in Persian and Near Eastern folklore.[11] We will discuss the first category of *devs*, the so-called "satanic" ones.

Armenian *devs* of "satanic" nature have also many common features with Near Eastern demons. They are immortal and possess a pernicious nature; they can become invisible; and their feet are backwards. They can be caught by people, and if someone sticks a needle in their nape or clothes, he can exploit them as servants for years.

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[10] Arm. (*h*)*skay* has of yet no convincing etymology, although it looks rather Iranian. Usually it is associated with *Saka*. However, M. Schwartz, commenting on this issue, notes: "I think, this is phonologically impossible. I'd start with MPers. *kay* 'giant' with *s-* prothesis—maybe via Parth. *skā* 'above'?".

[11] There is also an imaginary figure, *ṫovt*, which occurs only in fairy tales; it is a human-like monster living in the sea and bearing sometimes the epithet of *mardaker*, i.e. "cannibal". Probably, an echo of Biblical *Leviathan* (Ugaritic *Lôtan*).

From the animals, demons usually choose as their mediums cats, dogs, goats, cocks or hens, wolves, crows, owls, and snakes. The hyenas are never manifested as having a cultic value—evil or good, and their genitals or other parts of the body were never used in love magic or other magical procedures as in Iran and Central Asia.

Devs are afraid of iron objects, Cross, sacred formulas from the Holy Scripture, smoke of incense (rue, *Peganum harmala*), ringing of church bells, smell of garlic and onion, etc.

Armenian demons, except for few unambiguously male ones, are for the most part female, or non-specified. They traditionally appear as Gypsy women, usually dancing and singing and enticing people to participate in their orgies; at night they plait the manes of horses and ride them till complete exhaustion. The normal appearance of a female *dev* is depicted as a woman with long and hanging breasts, piercing eyes (mainly of red or blue colour), nappy red hair with glittering and sharp teeth. Like other diabolical figures in different traditions, being infernal creatures, the Armenian demons also, along with their backward feet, reveal obvious antibehavioural, abnormal characteristics.

Devs haunt desolated places (*anbnak tełik'*), ruins, deserts, mountain caves and gorges, cow-sheds, haylofts, basements of houses, and, especially baths, or they live in the places where ashes are available. Generally, there is an organic connection between *devs* and ashes in the Armenian tradition.

Devs can have sexual contact with mortal men and produce progeny, who are believed to be sickly and as a rule die shortly after birth.

An euphemism for supernatural evil beings is "those better than us", *meznic' laverə*, which is widely attested in various traditions of the region as a kind of *captatio benevolentiae* (cf., for instance, Pers. *az mā behtarān*, Kurdish *ži ma bāštirā*, etc).

Some relation between evil creatures and plants can also be traced in Armenian demonology. I identified two cases when the demonic names are homophones of floral terms—*xənǰələoz* (*xonǰoloz, kənǰələoz*), which is at-

tested also among the Turks (*koncoloz*), and *xəlvəlik*,[12] both female *devs* of the erotic sphere. As a rule, the plants with large and copious leafs are considered to be the favourite places of Satan, where he hides himself. It is symptomatic in this regard that cabbage and cress-salad are qualified by the Yezidi religious dogma as inauspicious (*naḥs*) and ritually unclean vegetables and are forbidden to be used in food.

Except for *gərot* (lit. "scribe"), *aṙnak* (from Syriac *harnāqā* "jackel"), and *šənofor* (*šənohvor*) (probably from *šun* "dog")—all psychopomps carrying the soul of dead, the New Armenian demonic nomenclature incorporates more than 20 characters, which I identified in the available folkloric and ethnographical publications, as well as in the field-work materials.[13]

Few of the later Armenian demons are obviously male, the rest are either female—mostly succubi or functioning in the sphere of childbirth—or with unspecified sexual belonging.

- *Dev*, a general denomination of all satanic creatures in the Armenian folk-beliefs. The term has a large derivational capacity; cf. *divotel* "to become possessed by evil spirits", *divabaro* "having daevic nature", *divaran* "devildom", etc. From MIran. *dēv* (< OIran. * *daiwa-* "demon", Skt. *déva-* "deity").
- *Al(kʿ)*, a universal demoness, attested in a vast area from Central Asia to the Near East, the Caucasus and South Russia. There is a huge bibliography on this evil being (see Asatrian 2001; Arakelova 2003). Arm. *al(kʿ)*, as well as *ăl/al* in the languages of the region, comes undoubtedly from NPers. *āl* "id.". Leaving aside the problem of *almasti/albasti*, a similar demoness in Central Asia, it seems, we are dealing here with a later creation—despite numerous attempts to trace its origin to an old etymon (see

[12] Both are wild herbs used in food: *xənǰəloz* is "Ornithogalum L.", but *xəlvəlik* has not been precisely identified; probably "O. acanthium L."? The plant-name *xəmbaba* is rather a kind of demonic symbol in a folk ritual, not a real demon (see Vardanian 2001).

[13] The story about the so-called *gišərvan merer* "mothers of night", recorded in Van by G. Sruanjdeanc' in the second half of the 19th century, is, in fact, a mere metaphor of night or darkness, not more. The main function of these night spirits was to produce darkness, without the explicit noxious nature of ordinary demons (see Asatrian/Dalalian 1999-2000).

the bibliography in Asatrian 2001). Most likely, it is simply a personification of the disease "German measles (scarlet fever)", called also *āl* "red".[14]

- *T'epła* (*təpł(a)*), has the same functions as *al(k')*, Arab. *umm ul-ṣibyān*—from Arabic *ṭābi'a*, identified first by Feydit (1973).
- *Xənǰəloz/kənǰəloz*, a succubus and a plant-name. The word, as the suffix *-oz* indicates, is an ideophone (cf. *pop-oz*, *k'ol-oz*, *tink-oz*, *lol-oz*, *čəloz*, etc.).
- *Xəlvəlik*, a female demon, often caught with sticking a needle in her nape and used in household as a servant maiden. She has backward feet and does everything in reverse order, functioning sometimes as a succubus, too. Probably from Arm. *xəlvəlal* "to wriggle, twist, writhe" (of sound symbolic origin, with suffix *-ik*). Also a plant-name.
- *Səlik-bəlik* (or *bəlik-səlik*), a pair-demoness, believed to be daughters of Satan; rhyme-words of ideophonic origin.
- *Xaṙa-xuṙa* "nightmare"; cf. Arm. dial. *xaṙaxuṙa* "rags; trifles; small things"; also Azerbaijani Turkish *yarayura* (*garagura*), Georgian *xaraxura* "id"? In any case, the word is obviously an ideophone.
- *Xatatič* "nightmare", probably of Semitic origin.
- *Xabubreš/xapupreš* "a succubus"; either directly from MPers. *Hubbabēš*, or, more likely, from Syriac *Ḥubbābeš*, recently discussed by Schwartz (2002: 233 ff.).
- *Xipilik/xipilak* "nightmare"; also, likely, from an unidentified Semitic form. It is attested among the Kurds of Urmiya as *xibilīk* (Kahn 1980: 181), and among the Turks as *hipilik*, etc.
- *Kap/kab* "a demoness harmful for women in labour", it hampers the childbearing process; from Arm. *kap* "bond, tie".
- *J̌adu* (or *ǰadu paṙaw*), a demoness, appeared as an old woman; also, sorceress (Pers. *ǰādū*); in several contexts, a synonym of *nene/nini* (Pers. *nana* "old woman, grandmother; midwife").
- *Gabus/kabus* "nightmare"; from Arab. *kābūs*, which is generally regarded as adaptation of *incubus*, though M. Schwartz (oral information) believes that it belongs to the group of numerous sinister names with the suffix *-wš* (*-ws*).

[14] According to Benveniste (1960: 70-71), from OIran. **āla-*, a parallel to Vedic *āla-* "arsenic".

- *Godos* "a succubus"; cf. in Arm. dialects of Western Anatolia *godoš/s* "buttocks" (Middle Arm. *kotoš* "horn", Ottoman Turkish *qodoš* "souteneur")?
- *Hadian* "a succubus", mentioned only by Father Łevond Alishan (1910: 229-230); probably from the Hebrew theonym *'Adonāy* through Arabic magical texts, where it features as *'dwn'y*.
- *Pupušik/pušik*, "sort of house-spirits in the shape of beautiful boys or girls"; an obvious ideophone.
- *Šəvod/t*, a house spirit, already discussed above.
- *P'urdik*, a synonym of *šəvod/t* (see above).
- *Gišervan geš*, lit. "night-demon", recorded in Vaspurakan, without a clear functional sphere. Probably just a descriptive characteristic for evil beings; or a succubus.
- *Arayim-taraym*, huge *devs* appeared in the New Year's night, in the folk-beliefs of the Armenians of New Nakhijevan.
- *P'okotn*, lit. "(the one whose) legs are leather straps"; an exact parallel to Pers. *davālpā(y)* or Turkish *ğayişbacak* (see Ebrahimi 2012: 102). *P'okotn* uses its legs to grip and enslave humans, who then have to carry it on their shoulders until they die.
- *Tavri č'lut*, lit. "ragamuffin, ragged fellow of cattle"; a human-like and very tall demon, whose emergence causes cattle-plague and pestilence, just like Kurd. *mērē šē/avē*, mentioned above (Movsisyan 1971: 61).
- *Səmbodik* "a house-spirit". Russell (1987: 455) identifies it, as if a chthonic creature, with Parth. *zambūdīg* "world". However, the Parthian word occurs in Manichaean texts as a learned adaptation of Buddh. Skt. *Jambudvīpa-* and, therefore, can hardly be a source of Arm. dial. *səmbodik* (cf. also *ǰambūdīg* "id." in Parthian; and Sogd. *f(ə)čambaδ* "world", from the same Indian form).
- *Hawtar* "a woman-like demon appeared with a spade in one hand and a pickaxe in the other; she used to exhume the newly buried dead bodies from the grave and eat them". She is characterised as *meṙel utoł*, i.e. "corpse-eater". The name of this evil being seems to be a Middle Iranian archaism in Armenian dialects with no attestation in Classical Armenian texts. It comes, likely, directly from MPers. *haftār* (cf. Sogd. *'βt'r/ əfdār/*) "hyena". The NPers. form of this word sounds *kaftār*, which also occurs in Armenian dialects as *k'aftar* with its direct meaning, "hyena" and, meta-

phorically, "old and decrepit woman". In Middle Persian, there were probably two parallel forms of this lexeme—*haftār* (attested in Armenian as *hawtar*) and **xaftār*, which is reflected, with dissimilation of the initial *x*- to the following spirant, in New Persian as *kaftār* (cf. also *kaftārā* in Syriac) (see Gershevitch 1971: 287; Ciancaglini 2008: 197-198).

There is also Georgian *aptar-i* "Hyäne, böse", attested already in the Bible translation (Bläsing 2000: 39, with a comprehensive list of all the cognate forms in New Iranian and adjoining languages). Because of the lack of the initial *h*-, it seems to have been borrowed not via Armenian, but rather directly from an Eastern Middle Iranian dialect (like Scythian), sharing with Sogdian similar characteristics regarding this lexeme (without *h*-) (Bläsing, ibid.).

- *P'amp'usik/p'usik* "a succubus in the form a cat"; also of sound symbolic origin.
- *Ifrit* "sort of *dev*, often female"; from Arab. *'ifrīt*, which is believed to have been ultimately borrowed from Iranian (from **āfrīt(ak)*).
- *Tamšel-Kumel*, a demonic pair, attested, as most of the Armenian *devs*, in Vaspurakan area (Movsisyan 1972: 62). Nothing is known about *Kumel* (probably, a turned form of *Muk'el*, i.e. Michael), but *Tamšel* is said to have been a lover of King Solomon's mother. The element *-el* in these names points to their Semitic (or pseudo-Semitic) origin.

A different category of imaginary beings of obviously evil nature includes ethnic names and social terms: *arab* "Arab" (sometimes equated with ordinary satanic *devs*; or qualified as microscopic noxious creatures), *xap'šik/xawč'ik* "Abyssinian" (Arab. *ḥabaš*), *derviš/darveš* "dervish, mendicant" (is believed to have the propensity of counting the teeth of people as a result of which they die; or he steals the small children and drinks their blood); *ǰəhud* "Jew" (with the same functions as the previous one), and *haǰi* (Arab.-Pers. *ḥāǰī*, a honorific title for people who visit Mecca as pilgrims). The latter's functions are vague, but more often close to those of *derviš* or *ǰəhud*.

Child-frightening demons (*mankasast voginer*) make also a separate group—all ideophones: *xox, xoxon, bobo,* and *bobox*—parallels to Pers. *lūlū, 'Alī-mouǰūd*, etc.

Concluding Remarks

Most of the Armenian demonic names either of Classical, or later, periods are of alien origin. In the Classical texts, we have only two or three names of possibly true Armenian provenance. The original names in the list of the later demons are mostly descriptive forms or just ideophones.

Unlike the Classical period where Iranian forms prevail, in the later nomenclature Semitic names are dominant. It is interesting that there is no original Turkish demon in the Armenian devildom (probably only *t'ap'agyoz* as the name of a "fabulous" monster). There is only one MIran. archaism in the later list (*hawtar*). The overwhelming majority of the later Armenian demons are female and are recorded in the southern and south-western areas of Historical Armenia.

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